



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## West Nile Virus Alert

**Window Rock, AZ** – The Navajo Nation Veterinary & Livestock Program reports they have two horses confirmed with the West Nile Virus in the Hunter's Point and St. Michael, Arizona vicinity.

West Nile Virus (WNV) causes an infection that is spread by mosquitoes. Mosquitoes get infected when they bite infected birds. Then the mosquitoes spread the virus when they bite people or other animals, such as horses. Horses are the main animals susceptible to the WNV. WNV cannot spread from animals to people or from person to person. WNV infections generally occur during warm weather months when mosquitoes are active, especially after rainfall.

Most people who have WNV infection have no symptoms or the symptoms may be so mild that people may not even realize that they have the virus. In rare cases, West Nile can lead to swelling of the brain (encephalitis), swelling of the spinal cord (myelitis), or swelling of the tissues around the brain and spinal cord (meningitis). Very few people with WNV infection will get a severe illness that affects the brain or spinal cord. When symptoms do appear, they begin 3 to 14 days after the mosquito bite (incubation period). Mild symptoms usually last for 3 to 6 days, they include:

- Fever
- Headaches, body aches, joint pain, or pain in your eyes
- Feeling very tired
- Rash, usually on the chest, back, arms
- diarrhea
- Swollen glands, in rare cases
- Feeling sick to your stomach or throwing up

If you get a more severe case of WNV infection, symptoms can last for weeks or months. Very few severe cases may involve problems with the brain and spinal cord and may cause:

- High fever
- Severe headaches
- Lack of coordination
- Confusion
- Tremors, convulsions, or muscle weakness
- Stupor or coma
- Stiff neck, paralysis or weakness

Navajo Nation Veterinarian, Dr. Scott Bender reports that horses show neurologic signs and symptoms, such as fever, head droop, loss of coordination (inability to stand), weakness, muscle twitching, apparent blindness, and seizures. Prevention is to get your horse vaccinated for West Nile Virus. Should you see any horses with these signs and symptoms or a large number of dead birds or horses in one location, please contact the nearest Navajo Nation Veterinary & Livestock Program.

For prevention, use mosquito repellent such as DEET; wear long-sleeved shirts and pants when you go outdoors. Avoid outdoor activity at sunrise and sunset when mosquitoes are most active. Do not leave puddles or open containers of water near our house because mosquitoes breed in standing water. # # #

